Gutter Magic
Issue #2 of 4
22-Page Comic Script

What I would like for the next few pages is to convey the sense of a tense standoff, like this one in The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qakWAS8ixtU) I'd like to start with those wide, deep perspective shots where you see just a bit of each duellist big in the foreground, and their opponent, tiny, across a bare stretch of ground, and move in continually closer, until we're tight, almost claustrophobic - then the action will explode big on the following page. Cinder and Shiver, should be standing somewhat forward and apart from their various retinues - give enough room so that you can focus on them without having to fill in the background characters except where noted.

PAGE 1 (3 PANELS)

PANEL 1.1
Large in the foreground, we see Cinder's hand, ready to snatch the gun from its holster. Across the market's courtyard, far back, Shiver stands flanked by her Ghost Knives. Her hand is at her side, holding a straight razor, which shimmers with magical energy (its ok if the razor is indistinct, the thing to convey is that she's holding something, but not aggressively postured) The key will be the magical energy, color and shape will tie it to the next panel.

PANEL 1.2
Same idea, but in reverse - we see Shiver's hand, holding the blade, looking downfield at Cinder, Blacktooth and Foulroot, standing in front of the ruins of the shop.

PANEL 1.3
Pulling way back and showing the scene from high above - the courtyard is like an oasis of calm, surrounded by the crowded, bustling market and the city beyond. Cinder and Shiver are facing off, while their respective allies watch.

PAGE 2 (5 PANELS)

PANEL 2.1
Close on Cinder's face, looking serious.

CINDER: I thought the Morgue wanted me alive, Shiver.

CINDER: For a while, at least.

PANEL 2.2
Close on Shiver's face - serious too, but there's a twinkle in her eye.

SHIVER: You stole from her, Cinder. She wants to make you suffer.

SHIVER: Easy to do if you're alive. And if you're not...

SHIVER: ...still easy.

PANEL 2.3
Close on Cinder - his eyes, narrowing, almost squinting.

CINDER: And you? You ready to die?

PANEL 2.4
Close on Shiver's razor, up against her cheek. She maintains her serious look, but there's a hint of surprise in there, too.

SHIVER: What, again?

PANEL 2.5
Tighter on Shiver’s mouth, her expression widened into a mocking smirk.

SHIVER: Sure.

PAGE 3 (7 PANELS)

PANEL 3.1
Shiver plunges the razor into her cheek, leaving a gash.

SHIVER: After so many years, it's almost appealing.

PANEL 3.2
Cinder gapes in surprise, holding his hand against his own cheek in reaction to a sudden pain.

SHIVER (CAP): "I don't remember it all… but death..."

PANEL 3.3
Close on Cinder's hand, blood stains his fingers.

SHIVER (CAP): "...death's just another place."

PANEL 3.4
Close on Shiver's face, mischief dancing in her expression. Blood trails down the side of her face.

SHIVER: And dying?

PANEL 3.5
Cinder's eyes are back up, looking intense. He has a bleeding gash on his cheek identical to Shiver's.

SHIVER (CAP): I mean, the actual moment?

PANEL 3.6
Close on Shiver placing the blade against her throat.

SHIVER: Like catching the train.

PANEL 3.7
Cinder’s fingers are just brushing up against the grip of his gun.

CINDER: Well.

PAGE 4 (SPLASH)

PANEL 4.1

Have the action just explode here. Cinder is firing from the hip, his gun barely clearing the holster (this video is a little cheesy, but it shows the kind of firing position I'm looking for: http://bit.ly/yk525m keys are that the gun is just out of the holster, arm is bent, leaning back slightly). The bullets thud into Shiver's upper body, sending her sprawling. I'd like to see this head on, with Cinder up and to the left of the page, with the bullets coming out towards camera, and Shiver sprawling towards camera and to the right bottom - as though we were over her shoulder before the impact sent her spinning.

CINDER: Have a nice trip.

SFX (GUN): BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

PAGE 5 (6 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Cinder is standing tall, smoke curling up from the barrel of his gun. Blacktooth stands next to him, both are looking off across the plaza.

BLACKTOOTH: Nice shooting.

BLACKTOOTH: Now can we get the hell out of here?

PANEL 2
A couple of Ghost Knives are helping Shiver to her feet, while the rest brandish their hand weapons, gauging a charge. She's obviously wounded badly, but she looks more angry than anything.

BLACKTOOTH (CAP): "I think you pissed her off."

PANEL 3
Cinder is reloading his revolver with a speedloader (http://bobmacs.com/images/L-2416shot.JPG) Blacktooth looks ahead warily.

CINDER: Well, Blacktooth? I thought the market took care of its own. Make with the secret passages again.

PANEL 4
Shiver shoves the Ghost Knives aside - they look surprised, but she has a look of utter determination on her face.

BLACKTOOTH (CAP): I get the feeling we've been disowned.

PANEL 5

Blacktooth lights a cigarette. Over his shoulder, behind, we can see Foulroot rummaging through the rubble of his stall.

BLACKTOOTH: Might not need it anyway. That witch just blew up our good friend Foulroot's livelihood.

PANEL 6

Blacktooth lets out the smoke, calm and collected. Behind him, Foulroot opens a box that's the size of a large suitcase.

BLACKTOOTH: I believe he'll have something to say about that. Am I right?

FOULROOT: Indeed.

PAGE 6 (3 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Foulroot has come up holding an old, weatherbeaten Thompson submachinegun.
(http://www.officialpsds.com/images/thumbs/tommy-gun-psd30433.png)

SFX: K-CHAK

FOULROOT: Indeed I do.

PANEL 2
Foulroot has advanced past Blacktooth and Cinder, brushing Blacktooth aside (maybe he's nearly knocked the cigar out of his mouth, and Blacktooth is recovering, important thing is to show he shoved his way past)

FOULROOT: I suggest you and your human friend run now, Blacktooth.
Because when I'm done with them...

PANEL 3
Over Foulroot's shoulder as he looks back, sneering and grinning. Behind him, we can see the GKs and Shiver starting to advance.

FOULROOT: ...I'll have something to say to you.

PAGE 7 (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1

Establishing shot, outside the Olivieri Bros. Funeral Home. A couple of laborers are loading a coffin onto a wagon outside. The building itself looks run down and shabby.

BLACKTOOTH(TAILLESS): This place is a dump, Whispers.

PANEL2

Inside the mortuary - a dark, dreary room full of long shadows. No bodies are out, but there are tables for them - also embalming equipment, blood spatters, etc. It shouldn't look like a serial killer's hideout, but it should look close. Just a kind of dirty, low rent place. Sanitation is not the main concern. Cinder and Blacktooth are on the one side of the room, looking unsettled and uncomfortable. Cinder definitely looks like he doesn't want to be there, while Blacktooth is a little more nonchalant - he's reaching into his pocket for another smoke.

BLACKTOOTH: How do you keep all that uptown money rolling in?

CINDER: We asked around. Pretty much every big noise in this city makes sure you're the guy burying their dead.

PANEL 3

Against the back wall, there is a large cupboard, with a variety of skulls lining the shelves. WHISPERS stands to the side, examining a tooth in the dim light of a hanging lamp. He holds it between his thumb and forefinger, close to his face, as he inspects it.

LETTERER NOTE: Whispers does not really speak - rather than a balloon, his dialogue should be rendered as free text, repeated over and over again, like a multitude of voices whispering on the wind.

WHISPERS: The dead have <u>secrets.</u>

WHISPERS: I <u>keep</u> them.

WHISPERS: <u>Quite</u> close.

PANEL 4

Close on Whispers, his head tilted upward, as he inspects the tooth closely.

WHISPERS: This... will suffice as payment.

PANEL 5

Pull back to show Whispers depositing the tooth into the bag at his belt - we can see its full of teeth and small bones.

WHISPERS: Oppenheimer... curious name.

PAGE 8 (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Blacktooth brings the cigar up to his lips.

BLACKTOOTH: He's some kinda wizard. My protegé here's obsessed with them. Wants to be one, if you can believe that.

PANEL 2
Whispers reaches up into the cabinet full of skulls.

WHISPERS: That is a... foolish ambition.

PANEL 3
Blacktooth, looking a bit dismissive, is about to light up - no flame yet, though. Cinder looks down at him, annoyed.

BLACKTOOTH: Tell me about it.

CINDER: Hey!

PANEL 4
Blacktooth shrugs.

BLACKTOOTH: What do you want from me? I don't get it.

BLACKTOOTH: I'd rather be rich. Or at least comfortably well-off.

PANEL 5
Whispers holds a skull in his hand. Little pinpricks of light shine from the eye sockets.

WHISPERS: Magic chooses the wizard. It is...

PAGE 9 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Cinder curls his lip in contempt.

CINDER: In the blood. I know.

PANEL 2
Flashback panel. (maybe sepia-toned?) A young Cinder watches a young Victor conjure a ball of light between his hands (they are 9 or 10 years old). Cinder looks on in wonderment.

CINDER (CAP): Been hearing that my whole life.

VICTOR: Look what my mom showed me how to do, Cin!

PANEL 3
Flashback - Cinder reaches out to touch the light.

CINDER (CAP): Cyrus' blood. My father's blood. Aunt Maeve's. And Victor's.

CINDER: Can I try, Victor?

PANEL 4
Flashback - Victor has closed his palm, the globe of light has disappeared. Victor gives Cinder a taunting kind of look - Cinder's feelings are obviously hurt.

VICTOR: Don't be stupid.

VICTOR: Even if I wanted to show you, you know you can't do it.

PANEL 5

Flashack - Victor has turned his back on Cinder, walking away from him. Cinder looks downcast.

VICTOR: And stop going through my books. You'll just disappoint yourself.

PANEL 6

Back in the present. Cinder narrows his eyes threateningly.

CINDER: I'm not paying you to ask why, though, am I? So get on with it.

PAGE 10 (5 PANELS)

PANEL 10.1
Whispers stands in profile. His chin is resting on his hand. He looks contemplative. Behind him, several skulls float in the air, with fire burning in the eye sockets.

WHISPERS: He is known. To many.

PANEL 2
Cinder looks intrigued.

CINDER: Can we speak to him?

PANEL 3
Whispers cocks his head slightly. The skulls mimic the angle.

WHISPERS: You cannot.

WHISPERS: He lives.

PANEL 4
Blacktooth sneers at Whispers.

BLACKTOOTH: What do you mean ‘he lives’? The war was a hundred–

PANEL 5
Close on Whispers’ face, (with some blank space to one side for the text) The tiniest bit of green flame sparkles in the depths of Whispers’ glasses.

WHISPERS: He lives.

PAGE 11 (6 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Cinder cocks his head, narrows his eyes; an idea has occurred to him.

CINDER: What about my grandfather? Cyrus Byrnes? Can you reach him?

PANEL 2
Whispers has plucked one of the skulls out of the air, the fires in its eyes go dim, almost out.

WHISPERS: I have tried.

WHISPERS: He is kept... safe from me.

PANEL 3
Whispers is putting the skulls back in the cabinet, but his head is turned over his shoulder as he addresses Cinder.

WHISPERS: Curious.

WHISPERS: Why Cyrus?

PANEL 4
Cinder gives a half-shrug.

CINDER: This Oppenheimer. He claims he was in the war. If he was, they knew each other. But my grandfather never mentioned him.

PANEL 5
Close on Whispers face - picturing the sort of shot where part of his face is cropped off, and we can see Cinder in the background over his shoulder.

CINDER: And all his journals are locked up in my cousin's tower.

WHISPERS: Journals. Dangerous places to keep secrets.

WHISPERS: Yet perhaps you should start there.

PAGE TWELVE

PANEL 1
Street-level view, looking up at Victor Byrnes' tower, Greyspire. It's not the tallest in the city, but its impressive nonetheless. It's made of smooth, grey stone, with elegant bas-relief carvings (ex: http://bit.ly/zvUPvH , http://bit.ly/yUemZL) accentuating the architecture. It's now dusk, and globes of light can be seen playing around the balconies on the upper floors (lower floors should be dark). Cinder and Blacktooth are walking towards the front entrance.

CINDER: For all the help Whispers was, I'm glad I stiffed the bastard.

BLACKTOOTH: Stiffed him?

CINDER: Yeah… That was a pig's tooth I paid him with.

PANEL 2
Blacktooth gives Cinder an incredulous look.

BLACKTOOTH: Oh, wonderful, Cinder. Pay the soul collector with a pigs tooth. He's not going to mind that at all.

PANEL 3
Cinder and Blacktooth look up at the structure, the globes of light are prominent around the top, and some tiny silhouetted figures can be seen flitting around, as though coming in for a landing.

CINDER: You saw him looking at it... he had no idea.

BLACKTOOTH: Hey... your cousin throwing a party or something?

PANEL 4
Cinder shrugs.

CINDER: Victor's running for office... he's been throwing them almost weekly. Not that I'm ever invited.

PANEL 5
Cinder looks at Blacktooth like he can't believe what he just heard.

BLACKTOOTH: Can't imagine why not, what with you stealing his books all the time.

CINDER: …

CINDER: It was only the one time.

PAGE 13 (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Cinder and Blacktooth approach a large, imposing door, with a large, stone face carved into the lintel - THE GUARDIAN. The face should be long, and drawn, reminiscent of a snobbish butler. Right now, its eyes are closed, and lips pursed in a disdainful expression.

CINDER: OK, twice,

PANEL 2
One of the Guardian's eyes cracks open, looking down.

CINDER: But by all rights, half the stuff in there should be mine, anyway.

CINDER: Cyrus was my grandfather, too.

PANEL 3
The Guardian shouts, Cinder and Blacktooth are surprised at the outburst.

GUARDIAN: None are welcome tonight! Least of all YOU.

PANEL 4
Cinder looks up at the Guardian, smirking.

CINDER: Come on, it's a party night. Victor will want to see me.

PANEL 5
The Guardian sneers down at Cinder.

GUARDIAN: He most certainly does not.

GUARDIAN: I have explicit instructions regarding you and your friend.

PAGE 14 (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1
The Guardian's face breaks out in a sinister looking grin.

GUARDIAN: In fact, Master Byrnes has expressly given me permission to use the spell of forlorn encystment to keep you imprisoned until --

PANEL 2
Cinder flashes back a smile that's just as sinister.

CINDER: Come on, we both know I'm getting in.

CINDER: Do I have to use the words?

PANEL 3
The Guardian looks worried.

GUARDIAN: You... you don't know them!

PANEL 4
Cinder tilts his head back, looking down his nose at the guardian. His expression is aloof, superior. He knows he's won.

CINDER: Don't I?

CINDER: The old man might not have picked me to run this place, but I'm still his grandson.

PANEL 5
The Guardian looks upset, defeated.

CINDER (CAP): You think he didn't tell me at least a few secrets?

PAGE 15 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1

Cinder and Blacktooth ascend a large, spiral staircase.

BLACKTOOTH: So what were those words you were on about?

CINDER: Words of rebuke.

BLACKTOOTH: Come again?

PANEL 2

Closer on the two climbing. Blacktooth looks interested, but Cinder's concentrating on business.

CINDER: When a bound spirit's not doing its job, there are words you can use to remind it who the boss is. Painful words.

BLACKTOOTH: So, ah... what are they? Just in case.

CINDER: Hell if I know.

PANEL 3

Cinder stands against a double doorway on the landing - he's in front of one of the doors, about to open it - but has turned to look back at Blacktooth.

CINDER: Alright. Here we are.

PANEL 4

Interior view of Victor's ballroom, where a ball is in progress. We see wizards, witches, elves and other magical beings attending - everyone is well dressed and classy. Magical globes of light hover in the air, illuminating the party. In the back of the room we see Cinder and Blacktooth slipping into the crowd.

CINDER (CAP): Try to blend in.

PAGE 16 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1
VICTOR BYRNES is in the middle of the party, mingling with several mages who are eating, drinking, and talking. He's standing directly next to FINN, a short, portly mage, who is draining a cup of wine dry.

FINN: An excellent wine, Victor! You must tell me the particulars of the conjuration.

VICTOR: Please, Finn. I'm running for a seat on the Conclave. Do you think I'd serve conjured wine?

PANEL 2
Victor looks over Finn's shoulder, distracted from the conversation. He's wearing a slight frown. Finn notices the look.

FINN: Of course, of course. No spell could reproduce such subtle undertones, no matter how precise.

FINN: In fact, I was remarking to Durand just the other day – er… what's wrong?

PANEL 3
Cinder and Blacktooth are slipping through the crowd - they are mostly ignored by the people around them - maybe one or two are looking at them curiously.

PANEL 4
Victor brushes past a surprised Finn, with an angry look on his face. Maeve stands to the other side, also surprised at the sudden move.

VICTOR: Excuse me a moment.

PAGE 17 (3 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Victor struggles to move through the crowd, but a pair of large men stand in his way. We can't see their faces yet, but their distinctive green sashes mark them as Ghost Knives.

VICTOR: Let me through!

PANEL 2
A slender female hand lightly touches Victor on the shoulder from behind. This is the MORGUE, though we can't see her face.

MORGUE: I'm afraid they can't, dear boy.

PANEL 3
THE MORGUE stands before Victor, looking glamorous and sinister. She's smiling, a glass of wine dangling casually from her hand. She's wearing a delicate evening gown - can we do something that incorporates little bird skeletons, like this? http://sixguncomics.com/gmagicart/morgue%20birds.jpg http://roseicollis.net/images/ana/breeding_clip_image002.jpg - I've always thought bird skulls were especially creepy, and I like the idea of her decorated with these delicate bones and skulls - what I'm thinking is maybe some of the little skeletons are in fact magically animated, perched on her shoulders mostly, but moving and flitting around occasionally in later panels. Behind her, the other guests stare with fear and apprehension.

MORGUE: We need to talk.

PAGE 18 (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1
A library-like room, with a large, panoramic set of windows overlooking the city. The walls are filled with tall shelves of books, and there are several display cases with various trophies, baubles, and statuettes. There's a portrait of Cyrus on one wall, older, in military dress. Also, there needs to be a large wardrobe in the room, big enough to hide in. Cinder stands with his hands on his hips, near the center of the room. Blacktooth stands at his side, looking around.

CINDER: Alright, his journal must be here somewhere.

CINDER: I remember it was bound in red leather.

PANEL 2
Blacktooth has picked up a small gold figurine of a gryphon, and is appraising it.

BLACKTOOTH: Right, right. Red leather...

PANEL 3
Cinder is yanking the figurine from Blacktooth's hand. Blacktooth looks surprised and disappointed.

CINDER: And <u>don't</u> pinch anything!

PANEL 4
Blacktooth sneers and rolls his eyes. Behind him we can see Cinder running his fingers along a shelf of books.

BLACKTOOTH (whisper): Whatever... mutter... grumble...

PANEL 5
Cinder has snatched a book off the shelf, with a look of excitement on his face.

CINDER: Here it is!

PAGE 19 (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Cinder has the pages open, reading from it. Blacktooth peeks around Cinder's elbow, trying to get a look.

CINDER: Look.

CINDER: "Poor Oppenheimer. We would never have won the war without him, yet instead of a monument, they gave him a cage in that damned spire."

PANEL 2
Cinder and Blacktooth gaze out the window, with the Chrysler spire prominent in the distance.

BLACKTOOTH: D'you think…

CINDER: Makes sense. No one's allowed near it.

PANEL 3
Close on Cinder as he speaks. His expression is serious, as if he's bitterly remembering something.

CINDER: Back when I used to crew on my dad's ship, we saw a tug get too close once, and--

PANEL 4
Blacktooth pulls at Cinder's arm, tugging him towards the wardrobe.

SFX: CREEEAK

BLACKTOOTH: Quick! Someone's coming!

PANEL 5
Victor is practically hurled into the room - there is a spectral, skeletal hand at his throat, pushing him along. He grasps at it with his own hands, with his teeth grit. In the background we can see Cinder pulling the door to the wardrobe shut.

PAGE 20 (6 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Victor struggles on his hands and knees, as the Morgue strides forward flanked from behind by her two guards. We can see the skeletal hand has leapt forth from her own - she holds her fingers in an identical way, as if they are around Victor's throat.

VICTOR: I thought you wanted to talk...

PANEL 2
The Morgue lifts her arm, and Victor is pulled to his feet by the hand around his neck.

MORGUE: < choking force >

MORGUE: This is how I talk, to people that cross me.

VICTOR: When have I ever–

MORGUE: Someone stole from me, Victor. Someone you know quite well.

PANEL 3
The hand is tight on Victor's throat. His expression is angry, tinged with fear.

VICTOR: Cinder.

PANEL 4
The Morgue smirks slightly.

MORGUE: Yes. He stole my copy of Pragmatic Thaumaturgy.

PANEL 5
Victor grabs at the hand, practically choking.

VICTOR: All this over a copy of Pragmatic Thaumaturgy? Are you mad? I have six in my own library! Take your pick!

PANEL 6
The Morgue opens her palm, and the spectral hand shrinks as it is drawn back into her own.

MORGUE: What he took is unimportant.

MORGUE: I will not be stolen from.

PAGE 21 (6 PANELS)

PANEL 1
Inside the wardrobe, Cinder has his gun drawn, as though he's about to go bursting out of there – Blacktooth is restraining him with a hand on Cinder's shoulder.

BLACKTOOTH (whisper): What are you doing?

CINDER (whisper): I can't just let her kill him!

PANEL 2
Close up on Blacktooth's face, as he hisses in Cinder's ear.

BLACKTOOTH (whisper): She's not killing him, she's using him.

BLACKTOOTH (whisper): Besides, what good is that gun against her?

PANEL 3
Victor is on his knees, recovering.

VICTOR: If you only knew how long he's been at this... how many of my own texts he's nicked... but he's harmless. Completely harmless.

VICTOR: He can't do anything with them, you see.

PANEL 4
The Morgue frowns slightly.

MORGUE: I'm afraid I don't.

PANEL 5
Victor gives a wan smile. It's not mean – it's just that he knows he's saying something absurd.

VICTOR: He... he wants to be a wizard.

VICTOR: The spark's not in him, but he's convinced himself there's some spell or ritual, or – I don't know. It's sad, really.

PANEL 6
The Morgue looks intrigued.

MORGUE: You're serious.

MORGUE: How... novel.

PANEL 7
Victor sneers at the Morgue

VICTOR: You're asking me to betray my own blood!

PANEL 8
Close on Morgue's face, holding an expression of pure malice. Her head's tilted forward, for emphasis, but there's no hint of a smile there. This is pure threat.

MORGUE: Oh, Victor. You foolish child.

MORGUE: I never ask.

PAGE 22 (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1
The Morgue extends her hand, palm upwards – revealing a small bird's skull. Tendrils of mist billow out of it's mouth. Brett – I think we can keep the panel as drawn, just changing her hand so its holding the skull.

MORGUE: I command.

MORGUE: <soul cage>

PANEL 2
The tendrils burrow into Victor's mouth and nostrils. His eyes convey an unspeakable horror. I think we can also keep this panel, and just change the way the mist is flowing

VICTOR: HKK

PANEL 3
We see a ghostly image of Victor's body being carried by the mist, as if caught in a vortex. – also, just adding the ghostly image to what we have already should work.

SFX: Aaaaaaaahhhh!

MORGUE (CAP): Now, now… it's just a piece of your soul.

PANEL 4
Pulling back, we see the mist vortex swirling into the bird skull's mouth.

MORGUE (CAP): Just enough to keep you up at night.

PANEL 5
The Morgue snaps the bird's jaws shut.

SFX: SNAP

MORGUE (CAP): Deliver your cousin, or you'll never know rest again…

PANEL 6

In the foreground, Victor's body lays prone, gasping. Above him, The Morgue and her henchmen turn to go.

VICTOR: >gasp<

MORGUE: …in life, or death.